

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An encapsulated probiotic in which one or more probiotic microorganisms are encapsulated in a protective encapsulant to prolong the storage life of the probiotic, wherein the encapsulant is formed by the combination of a film forming protein and a carbohydrate in which the encapsulation is achieved by,
 - a) mixing a water dispersible probiotic microorganism in an aqueous suspension of a film forming protein and a carbohydrate, or
 - b) mixing an oil dispersible probiotic microorganism in an oil in water emulsion of a film forming protein and a carbohydrate and a fat, or
 - c) mixing a probiotic microorganism in an oil which is subsequently dispersed in a film forming protein and a carbohydrate.
2. (Currently Amended) An encapsulated probiotic as claimed in claim 1, wherein-in which the carbohydrate contains a reducing sugar group.
3. (Currently Amended) An encapsulated probiotic microorganism as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein-in which one or more prebiotic materials are mixed with the probiotic microorganisms.
4. (Currently Amended) An encapsulated probiotic microorganism as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein-in which the carbohydrate in the film forming composition is a prebiotic carbohydrate.
5. (Currently Amended) An encapsulated probiotic microorganism as claimed in claim 1, wherein-in which the protein is casein or whey protein.
6. (Currently Amended) An encapsulated probiotic microorganism as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein-in which the carbohydrate is a resistant starch or a high amylose starch.
7. (Currently Amended) An encapsulated probiotic bacteria as claimed in claim 2, wherein the protein and carbohydrate are is-heat processed

8. (Currently Amended) An encapsulated probiotic bacteria as claimed in claim 2, wherein the protein and carbohydrate are ~~is~~ heat processed in the presence of an oil or fat prior to addition of the probiotic bacteria.
9. (Currently Amended) A probiotic bacteria formulation in claim 3, wherein the starch is processed by heating and/or microfluidisation.
10. (Original) An encapsulated probiotic microorganism as claimed in claim 1 which is spray dried or freeze dried to form a powder.
11. (Currently Amended) An encapsulated probiotic microorganism as claimed in claim 1 in which the probiotic microorganism is selected from the group consisting of bifido bacteria, lactobacilli, saccharomyces, lactococci, streptococci, and propionibacteria.
12. (Withdrawn) A probiotic powder consisting of a probiotic bacteria selected from bifido bacteria, lactobacilli, saccharomyces, lactococci, streptococci and propionibacteria encapsulated in a film forming mixture of casein or whey protein and an oligosacharride.
13. (Withdrawn) A probiotic powder as claimed in claim 12 in which the film forming mixture has been heated to form Maillard reaction products between the oligosaccharaide and the casein or whey protein.
14. (Withdrawn) A probiotic powder as claimed in claim 12 in which the probiotic bacteria is a liquid probiotic concentrate
15. (Withdrawn) A probiotic powder as claimed in claim 12 in which the probiotic bacteria is freeze dried.